

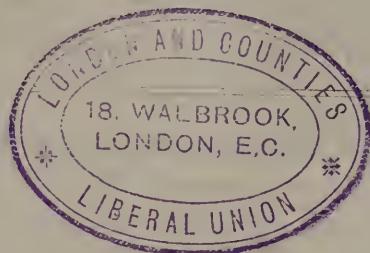
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ELECTORAL PURITY AND ECONOMY.



BY

SYDNEY C. BUXTON,

Author of "Political Manual," Etc.

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THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE of the LONDON AND COUNTIES LIBERAL UNION publish this Essay, which has been kindly written for them by the Author, in view of the re-introduction of the "Parliamentary Elections (Corrupt and Illegal Practices) Bill" of the Attorney-General, and the prospect of early legislation upon one of the most urgent and important questions of the day. In doing so they think it desirable to state that the practical recommendations it contains have not yet been considered by the Committee, and that the Committee do not, therefore, necessarily endorse all the reforms suggested; but they issue it as a contribution towards the discussion of the subject.

The Committee will be glad to receive any suggestions that will aid them in their consideration of the Bill.

18, WALBROOK, LONDON, E.C.,
March, 1882.

ELECTORAL PURITY AND ECONOMY.

The abolition of electoral corruption, and the curtailment and reform of electoral extravagance, is one of the most important and pressing questions of the day, and deserves to be carefully considered and thoughtfully discussed. The question becomes now of more immediate interest in consequence of the re-introduction of the Attorney-General's Corrupt Practices Bill, which last Session was crushed out by the pressure of Irish matters.

The delay which has occurred need not, however, be regretted, if the Bill be re-introduced and passed this Session. The interval has allowed time for reflection, and for criticism of its principle and details; while, moreover, the fact that a few bribers—would that the number had been larger—have lately been convicted by juries, sentenced by Judges, and their punishment approved by public opinion, will give the Bill a better chance of being practically useful, and not merely ornamental—the fate of too many Corrupt Practices Bills.

The object of this short paper is to endeavour to point out the reforms which appear to the writer essential for the success of any measure designed to suppress bribery and curtail expense.

It is impossible, within the limits of a few pages, to give more than the bare outlines of the suggested reforms, nor is it possible exhaustively to argue each point. It is hoped, however, that the suggestions here offered may induce the reader carefully to consider the whole question of electoral corruption and extravagance, and enable him to make up his mind how far he is disposed to go in the matter of reform. Having once made up his mind, it becomes his duty, as far as he can, to throw in

his weight on the side of those who are endeavouring to put an end to electoral malpractices.*

Though this paper is written for, and published by a Liberal Association, the subject herein discussed has a great advantage over many other political matters, inasmuch as it is in no way a party question. All honest politicians are equally interested in effectual reform. Both sides have sinned deeply; neither can cast the first stone; and they may well coalesce in endeavouring to exorcise from our midst the only form of real corruption which still haunts the body politic.

It is not necessary in such a paper as this to take a retrospect of past corruption, and compare it with that which still clings to us; nor is it necessary to enlarge on the existing systems of bribery, corruption, and extravagance.

We can come at once to the remedies.

The question of electoral purity and economy naturally divides itself into two parts, though the connection between them is vital; and the remedies proposed may be discussed under the heads of :—

Reforms which have for their object the reduction of electoral expense and indirect bribery.

Reforms which have for their object the abolition or prevention of direct bribery and corruption.

The measures necessary for the curtailment of expense and prevention of indirect bribery have been placed first, for in reality they are of the greater importance, affecting as they do, in one way or another, every constituency in the kingdom, while direct bribery is confined to a comparatively small number of constituencies.

I. Expense and Indirect Bribery go hand-in-hand, inasmuch as

* Perhaps I may refer any readers who may be interested in the subject, to former articles in which I have endeavoured more thoroughly to discuss most of the points here raised, namely: "The Cost of Elections," *Fortnightly Review*, February, 1880; "Bribery and Corruption," *Nineteenth Century*, November, 1880; and "The Attorney-General's Corrupt Practices Bill," *Contemporary Review*, May, 1881. In this last article I have endeavoured to criticise the new Corrupt Practices Bill, and to point out wherein it ought, in my opinion, to be amended, if it is to be really efficacious in putting down bribery and curtailing expense.



every penny spent beyond what is absolutely necessary—and a very small percentage of the present expenditure is really “necessary”—must be corrupt expenditure, though by no means always wilfully corrupt.

The cost of elections is enormous. Adding 25 per cent. to the “returned expenses” of the last three elections—in order to bring them more in accord with the actual expenditure—we find the totals to be as follows; and these figures are certainly under the mark:—1868, £1,800,000; 1874, £1,400,000; 1880, £2,200,000.

If we analyse these totals, taking 1880 as an instance, we find that the expenditure of that year was made up as follows:—

Hire of Conveyances, $16\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. of the total.

Agents, Clerks, Canvassers, Messengers, etc., $39\frac{1}{4}$ per cent.

Printing and Advertising, Committee-Rooms, and miscellaneous, 37 per cent.

Returning Officers' charges, $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.

In order to discover where legitimate reductions of expenditure can be obtained, we will take each of these items separately.

i. COST OF CONVEYANCE.—It is now generally admitted that payment for the conveyance of voters, in boroughs at all events, shall be no longer allowed; and that provision being made for an increased number of polling places in counties, conveying should be prohibited there also. But, in addition, it is necessary that an owner should be debarred from having a tacit understanding whereby he places his vehicles and horses at the disposal of a candidate, with the hope or certainty of future advantage to himself. The simple and the only way of preventing such infractions of the law would be to supply an ample number of polling places, and to forbid any volunteer conveying at all; the onus of proof—in case of petition or inquiry—lying on the voter conveying himself, or being conveyed, to show that the conveyance belonged to him, or was *bonâ fide* hired by himself for his own use alone. In order that physical infirmity should not incapacitate a voter from recording his vote, it should be the duty of the Returning Officer, on receipt of a doctor's certificate, to provide a conveyance for the afflicted voter, charging the cost to the “official expenses.” Thus no one could be corruptly

conveyed, while no one would be prevented from going to the poll.

2. EXPENDITURE ON AGENTS, CLERKS, CANVASSERS, MESSENGERS, WATCHERS, BILL POSTERS, BOARD BOYS, ETC.—The greater portion of this expenditure is merely indirect bribery ; and can be easily prevented by strictly limiting the numbers who may be employed and paid. At present, unfortunately, there is absolutely no legal limit to the number of voters and non-voters who may be engaged; the only checks being, firstly, the never-carried-out enactment that the vote of an elector who is paid and then votes can be struck off the roll on scrutiny ; and, secondly, the fear that, in case of a petition, the Election Judges may consider that the amount of “employment” had been corruptly large. A limit to the numbers, and the prohibition of certain forms of employment, are therefore essential.

Expenditure on canvassers, watchers, bill-posters, and board-boys may well be prohibited altogether ; the two former functions, if undertaken at all, would be much better performed by volunteers ; the latter are unnecessary.

Not more than one paid agent should be allowed to each candidate. It is almost essential to have one paid accredited agent, but the rest of the work at present done by paid agents, should be done by volunteer assistance, or not at all.

It is necessary to have a certain number of paid assistants for the conduct of an election, and for the performance of the clerical and other administrative work. This being granted, three questions arise :—

- (i.) Should the candidate be permitted to employ voters ?
- (ii.) What proportion of persons to electors should be allowed to be employed and paid ?
- (iii.) How can the limit be made to work equitably in cases of joint, divided, or single candidatures ?

The answer to the first question is simple. Make it necessary for the agent to return the names of all those employed and paid, and make it the duty of the Returning Officer to strike off from the register, for that election only, the names of any voters so returned. Thus the conductors of the election will be at liberty to choose the men best adapted for their

wants, whether electors or non-electors; while all opportunity of bribing voters by employing them would be at an end.

The second question is more difficult of reply. The numbers first decided on must necessarily be experimental and subject to revision after trial. Care must be taken not to draw the lines too close; and as—wherever the limit may be fixed—the names of all those employed will now have to be returned, the evil of “bribery by employment” would be reduced to a minimum; and the question would become one merely of expense. The curtailment of expense is of course a very important matter, but after all, it would be better policy to allow a reasonable, though limited, amount of expenditure,—even though it were somewhat higher than we might theoretically wish—than, by making the limits more stringent, to open a way to the temptation or to the supposed necessity of breaking the law. Probably it would be as well to allow one clerk and one messenger to every 500 electors for the period comprising the time between the declaration of the dissolution and two days before the day of poll, inclusive. On the day before the poll, and on the day of poll, the permitted numbers might well be increased by one-third. A less number could hardly, at present at all events, accomplish the work required.

The third question is still more difficult to answer. It is well known that the expenses of two candidates running together, very little, if at all exceed those of a single candidate. How, then, is the restriction on employment to be arranged so that it shall not unfairly handicap either the single candidate or the separate candidatures? Two candidates running together could hardly in fairness be allowed to employ double the numbers permitted to the single adversary. On the other hand, though there is usually an advantage from a party point of view in joint candidatures, if, as regards employment, the two candidates were to be reckoned merely as a “single candidate,” it would often be thought more advantageous, in order to secure the fullest amount of employment, for them nominally to run separately. It is necessary therefore to allow to the joint candidature something more than the single, and a good deal less than the double allowance. Probably some such limit as this would work satisfactorily—for a single candidate the scale, as above given, should be sufficient, while two candidates running together should be restricted to one

agent only, but might be allowed one clerk and one messenger for every 400 electors, with a proportionate increase on the day before and the actual day of poll.

There remains the question of the definition of “joint candidatures,” but no difficulties need arise on the point. To sign the same address, to canvass together, to address the same meetings, one or all of these actions should constitute a joint candidature.

3. EXPENSES OF PRINTING, STATIONERY, COMMITTEE-ROOMS, AND MISCELLANEOUS.—The number of hired Committee-Rooms should be strictly limited ; and not more than one for every 750 electors in boroughs, and one for every 500 electors in counties, should be allowed. Moreover, there should be a further prohibition against engaging them in public-houses. The numbers being thus limited, there would be no necessity to disfranchise the beneficial owners of the rooms ; such disfranchisement would greatly restrict, and perhaps injuriously restrict, the choice of rooms, while in cases of schoolrooms and such like, in which many persons may be pecuniarily interested, it would be unfair and a mistake.

As regards the expenditure on printing, stationery, and hire of rooms for meetings, etc.,—what may be called the literature and education department of the election ; and which is at the same time the least in amount, and the most useful branch of expense—it is very difficult to fix any proper limits of expenditure, though something may be done by the process of exhaustion, and by forbidding certain unnecessary items which are now winked at or allowed. It would be nothing but an evil, and an evil of a serious kind, to limit or reduce the number of meetings, or to prohibit altogether the distribution of addresses, reports of speeches and educating literature, etc., all of which, however, involve some cost. Undue expenditure on these items would in the future be checked by the knowledge that the accounts must be properly returned, and that any extravagant expenditure would be thus revealed.

Forbid, however, that which is almost universal, and very often used for improper purposes, the issue of “polling cards” to the electors. It should be the duty of the Returning Officer to send to each elector a card containing the necessary information as to day of poll, number on register, polling place, etc., the cost to be

placed to the “official expenses.”—Forbid also the issue of letters containing stamped promises of support, to be filled up by the recipient and returned.—Forbid advertisements in the newspapers, except of meetings. Party newspapers, in return for their support, often reap a golden harvest at election times, from the advertisements of addresses, etc., which are absolutely needless, seeing that the electors have already received the addresses, and might almost know them by heart.—Moreover, to prevent the expenditure under any of these heads from being used for purposes of indirect bribery, by a distribution of the patronage as a sort of retaining fee over a large number of persons, it could easily be enacted that not more than two firms or shops, or for small constituencies one only, might be employed to supply any printing, stationery, and such like that was required.

Expenditure on boards, ribbons, flags, etc., should be rigidly prohibited.

4. The best additional check on the expenses and limitations, as a whole and individually, is to provide that a *True Return* of all and every expense connected with the election should be made by the candidate and his agent, together with a sworn declaration of accuracy; any infringement of the law subjecting the breaker to action for perjury, loss of seat, and other punishments. At present every one makes his return of expenses as he thinks fit, and it is notorious that the majority of the returns are wilfully or carelessly inaccurate and under-stated. If, however, a declaration of correctness were necessary, an efficient check would be kept over all the election expenses; while the fact that those returns would be published, and be at the disposal of a petitioner, would tend to restrain even the most extravagant agents and candidates within legitimate bounds. Such an enactment, if rigidly enforced, combined with limits as to employment, etc., would do more than any other reform to reduce expenditure and prevent indirect bribery.

5. In instituting these returns and the above-mentioned limitations, it would be necessary to define the *Date* from whence “employment” might begin; the “declaration” would cover all the expenses incurred in connection with the election. Perhaps for a general election, the most convenient date would be the day on which the Prime Minister publicly declared that Parliament was about to be dissolved. He might be required formally to notify

the fact to the Speaker, so that the date might be official. For bye-elections the day of application for the writ seems to be the earliest which could really be taken as official.

6. In order still further to prevent expenditure, and strictly to limit expenses under each individual head, it is proposed by some—and the proposal is included in the new Corrupt Practices Bill—to lay down a *Maximum Scale of Expenditure*, proportionate to the number of electors, making it illegal to expend a penny beyond the sums mentioned in a schedule. I do not believe in the advisability or practicability of this proposal. However much one may approve the principle of a maximum scale, one cannot disguise from oneself the difficulty, nay the impossibility of putting it into practice.

The objections to any scale seem to be as follows :—

(i.) A different scale would be required in counties and boroughs. A higher scale of expenditure would be required for straggling, than that which would be necessary in compact constituencies.

(ii.) As some election contests are short and some are prolonged, a fixed scale would permit an extravagant expenditure at one time, and unduly limit expenditure at another. A sliding scale adapted for varying lengths of contest would be impossible of conception.

(iii.) No scale could be made to work fairly in the case of both joint and single candidatures; however much modified, it would be too liberal in the one case, or too niggardly in the other.

(iv.) The candidate who had exceeded his limit—no unlikely occurrence—would be obliged either to make a false return and so break the law a second time, or else, by giving a correct return, at once subject himself to pains and penalties.

(v.) A maximum scale would inevitably tend to become the minimum scale of expenditure for all elections.

Practically it would be found impossible to invent a workable scale which would be fair all round, and unless the scale were equally applicable to every constituency, it would be inexpedient to legalise it. I believe that a sworn return of expenditure, and a limitation of employment, etc., would be a self-adapting and sufficient check on extravagance, even though no scale of maximum expenditure were laid down.

7. RETURNING OFFICER'S EXPENSES.—These expenses have really nothing to do with the preventible expenditure at elections, but affect merely its incidence. The question involved is whether the candidate shall continue to bear the heavy expenses, which are forced upon him by the State, and are in no way voluntary on his part ; or whether the State, having elaborated a costly machinery of election, should not itself bear the burden. It seems to be generally allowed that the transference of the "official expenses" to the rates or taxes would be fair and advantageous ; but the question is complicated by the necessity which would arise, if all compulsory expenditure at elections were abolished, of devising some simple and efficacious means whereby any unseemly multiplication of unworthy candidatures would be prevented. Probably,—in default of second ballots, such as they have in France, and elsewhere, and which we may hope some time or other to see introduced into England,—a scheme such as the following would be workable, and also satisfactory : That each candidate should be obliged, as at present, to deposit or give security for a certain sum to the Returning Officer,—which sum should be the same in every case,—to be refunded in its entirety after the election, if he had polled say a third or a quarter of the total number of electors. If he failed to poll as great a proportion as that, the deposit would be forfeited, and would go to the relief of the rates or taxes charged with the official expenses.

8. Before turning to the question of direct bribery, I would add a word of regret at the omission from the Bill of all reference to a very important subject, namely, the advisability of prohibiting all *Systematic Canvassing* at elections, volunteer as well as paid, and that also on the part of the candidate. Canvassing at elections is a fruitful source of extravagance, bribery, intimidation, undue influence, perjury, etc., and utterly useless as an educating power. That canvassing could without much difficulty be defined and prohibited, I do not think it would be hard to show ; and I am convinced that no legislation respecting corrupt practices can be final which does not provide for its total prohibition.

II. We now come to the second part of the subject—*the Prevention of Direct Bribery.*

The object of all reforms in this direction should be not only to obtain the greatest amount of exposure, but also as much conviction and punishment of crime as possible. It is very little good exposing guilt—in fact, it is merely demoralising—unless conviction and punishment are to follow in a large number of cases.

To obtain *Exposure* of guilt, we should endeavour to make it to the interest of all honest men to contribute towards such exposure ; and we should take care not to place stumbling blocks in the way ; or to involve the innocent in the downfall of the guilty. The initial step to exposure is the Petition ; the next the Petition Trial ; and thirdly, the Inquiry by Royal Commissioners ; but without the Petition there will be no movement. We ought, therefore, to encourage as far as possible the filing of petitions. No fear need be felt that frivolous or unnecessary petitions would be thereby encouraged, for the cost will always deter men from undertaking them unless moderately certain of success.

It might perhaps in certain cases be possible to institute some simpler initial form of exposure than the petition. An appeal, assented to by a certain number of electors, might, without expense to them—if they could show good grounds for their action —be followed by an Inquiry directed by the Public Prosecutor. But it is doubtful if any form of procedure will take the place of the petition, which is, after all, stimulated not only by the desire to expose and punish the bribers, but by the more active and immediate hope of ousting the member, perhaps of obtaining the seat, or, at all events, of forcing another election. In any case, as far as discouragement and encouragement are concerned, any other form of inquiry would stand in the same position as the petition.

i. There is at present one very serious obstacle in the way of petitions—and this more especially in the worst boroughs, in those whose guilt eminently requires exposure—and that is the fear of *Disfranchisement* or suspension of writ following on petition. This fear—and it is a very real and living fear—not only prevents many petitions from being filed, which would otherwise be presented and lead to good results, but also largely interferes with exposure at the second stage of the proceedings, at the Petition Trial. At present it is against the interests of every one to expose more of the bribery at the trial than can possibly be helped. The great object is, while producing enough evidence

to unseat the member, to hoodwink the Judges as to the extent of the corruption, and to prevent their reporting in such terms as will necessitate a Royal Commission, which may be followed by suspension of writ or disfranchisement.*

The would-be petitioner will not petition unless he thinks he may obtain the seat or force another election, and if he feels pretty certain that he, and his friends, while exposing the adversary, will ultimately be hoist with his own petard, he will probably decline to incur the certain expense, trouble, and odium of a petition. Moreover, the fear of disfranchisement removed, petitions would be more likely to be successful, for evidence which is now often kept back could then be produced without risk of consequences ; while witnesses would have less reason or inclination to conceal the truth, if it were certain that disfranchisement would in no case follow on their revelations. Thus we see that the two causes which prevent petitions—the fear of proving too little, and being unsuccessful ; and the fear of proving too much, and damning the borough,—are made more real and are accentuated by the presence of the fear of disfranchisement. During the actual election the fear of disfranchisement in no way deters the bribers from acting, and in fact often incites them to renewed activity in order so far to damage the character of the borough that no one will dare to petition.

If disfranchisement were abolished, and if it were enacted that a successful petition or inquiry should be always followed by the appointment of a Royal Commission ; resulting in the scheduling (*i.e.*, the striking off from the register) of all those found to have been guilty of corrupt or illegal practices,† and the prosecution of the guilty who have not received certificates of indemnity ; to be subsequently, in every case, followed within a short period by the issue of a new writ ; petitions would be encouraged, and the purged constituency would have a fair chance of conducting its elections with purity.

* For instance, the House last year actually divided over the question of whether or no a Royal Commission should be appointed in the case of Gloucester, the Judges having reported only one or two cases of bribery. A Commission was appointed, with the result that 2,000 persons were scheduled for bribery.

† Those scheduled must of course be prohibited from taking any part in the subsequent election—their doing so in any capacity must invalidate the election of their friend. Moreover, the unseated member (if not scheduled) must also be prohibited from assisting in the subsequent election.

More would by this means be done to abolish bribery than by the disfranchisement of twenty boroughs.*

2. In order not to discourage exposure, the cost of the petition and Royal Commission should in no way be saddled on any of the guilty who are allowed to confess and are indemnified. † Again, I would not have any official attend the Petition Trial with a view to the immediate prosecution of those concerned in the bribery, as proposed by the Attorney-General's Bill. Either of these courses would infallibly shut the mouths of many essential witnesses, and would thus militate against the exposure which is our present object—our aim being to obtain evidence sufficient afterwards to convict the chief offenders.

3. So far we have been speaking of exposure of guilt—we now come to the question of *Conviction*. In order to obtain conviction and punishment, considerable alterations are required in the *Appointment of Royal Commissioners*, and in the *Form of Procedure* adopted by them. Disfranchisement being abolished, every successful petition—whether the Election Judges report that “corrupt practices *extensively* prevailed” or no—should be followed by a Royal Commission, in order that the inquiry into the corruption of the constituency—which is necessarily partial and imperfect before the Election Judges—should be continued and consummated. The present mode, however, of conducting these inquiries, while being well calculated for exposure and condonation of bribery and corruption, is better adapted for facilitating the escape of all concerned than for the conviction of any of the bribers. For instance, in seven corrupt boroughs vivisected by Royal Commissioners in 1880, nearly 8,000 persons were scheduled for bribery committed in 1880 and 1874, and, in the result, only twelve of these were left unprotected by certificate of indemnity! This miscarriage of justice is partly due to the fact, that, so long as disfranchisement remains, it is necessarily thought more important to direct the energies of the Commissioners to the

* For further enlargement of this argument, see the *Nineteenth Century*, November, 1880, “Bribery and Corruption.”

† Any witnesses before the Election Judges or the Royal Commissioners, who are called and speak the truth, receive a certificate indemnifying them against further criminal or civil process—though not necessarily against disqualifications as to voting, etc.

exposure of the general guilt of the constituency than towards the conviction of particular offenders.

These figures are a satire on the proceedings of the Commissioners and show how radically their mode of action requires amendment. It appears that, in the first place, the Commissioners are paid more or less according to the length of the inquiry,—and the inquiries drag on interminably. Secondly, they appear to have an idea that their Commission instructs them—or they find it the easier mode of proceeding—to allow the sinners to confess in batches, and then to shrive them; while, as time hangs heavy on their hands, jokes, repartee, and laughter necessarily accompany the proceedings. The Commissioners ought to be so instructed, that they shall understand their duty to be to examine into the corruption that may have existed; to call enough of the bribers and bribees to obtain evidence sufficient to incriminate the chief agents and chief offenders, and if possible, the candidates where guilty; and then to report these facts for the Attorney-General to take action in the matter, and to prosecute those not indemnified. If any of the incriminated persons desired to deny on oath the accusations made against them, they should of course be allowed the opportunity of so doing, but they ought not to be permitted to go further and confess other guilt and be indemnified.

4. *Betting and treating* should be properly defined and made corrupt practices.

III. A word must be said as to the *Penalties* which ought to be proscribed for bribery, corruption, incorrect returns, extravagance, and infractions of the laws of prohibition and limitation. For the worst offences at all events, for the first three offences and for the last, the penalty to the candidate must always be—in addition to loss of seat, and if found personally guilty, imprisonment, fine, etc.—perpetual disqualification to sit for the same constituency again. Thus alone will some men be really deterred from bribery and extravagant expenditure, not only during the election itself, but also between elections. If the candidate be allowed to stand again at some future time for the same constituency, he may think it worth while to sow his golden seed, taking his chance of discovery, in the hope and trust of reaping his harvest in later years.

The “between whilsts” expenditure is difficult to touch or define as illegal and corrupt, and is best prevented by the above penalty of perpetual disqualification to stand for the same seat.

For the smaller offences the penalties must be also severe; entailing loss of seat—though not necessarily perpetual disqualification—imprisonment, and a fine.

IV. On the question of disqualification, arises that of “*Agency*”—whether it should not be defined, so that a candidate shall really be able to tell who are the agents for whose conduct he is responsible and for whose evil deeds he may be made to suffer; instead of, as it is assumed, being at the mercy of any self-constituted agent who may risk the seat through over-zeal or even spite. I believe, however, that it would be a fatal mistake to define “agency.” If it could be defined, which would not be an easy matter, and if it were defined, no briber would ever be an “agent” in the legal sense of the word, and it would become increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to make the candidate responsible for the conduct of those who in spirit were his agents, but who had carefully avoided being so in letter.

V. Many other points arise in the discussion of the important questions of bribery and expense, but space will not here permit even of their mention.

Municipal elections might very well be made to fall under the same laws relating to bribery and expenses as Parliamentary elections.

VI. Briefly to sum up the suggestions made,—marking with an asterisk those which are wholly, and with a dagger those which are but partially incorporated in the Corrupt Practices Bill—we have:—

(i.) † All conveying of voters, paid or voluntary, in counties as well as boroughs, to be prohibited; while, at the same time, a greater number of polling places should be provided.

(ii.) * One paid agent only to be allowed to each candidate.

(iii.) † One clerk and one messenger to be allowed to each single candidate for every 500 electors, up to two days before the day of poll, the numbers to be then increased to one for each 350 electors.

(iv.) In the case of joint candidatures, the proportionate numbers to be 400 and 300.

(v.) There should be no prohibition against employing electors; but the names of those employed and paid must be sent in to the Returning Officer, who shall strike off from the register the names of any voters so employed.

(vi.) * The employment of all paid canvassers, watchers, board-boys, bill-posters, etc., to be prohibited.

(vii.) * All payments for boards, placing addresses in windows, etc., flags, ribbons, etc., to be prohibited.

(viii.) Polling cards, return letters, etc., to be prohibited.

(ix.) Not more than two firms or shops to be allowed to be employed to supply all the printing, stationery, etc.

(x.) † Not more than one Committee-Room to be allowed for each 750 electors in boroughs, and one for each 500 electors in counties.

(xi.) * Committee-Rooms not to be permitted to be engaged in public-houses.

(xii.) * A proper return of election expenses, coupled with a sworn declaration of accuracy, to be made by the candidate and agent.

(xiii.) A successful petition to be followed, in every case, by the appointment of a Royal Commission, which shall report and schedule the guilty persons.

(xiv.) The Attorney-General to prosecute any of those reported as guilty who are not indemnified, and against whom there is sufficient evidence to warrant a prosecution.

(xv.) The penalty of disfranchisement to be totally abolished; and, after the Royal Commission has reported, the guilty scheduled, and where possible prosecuted, a new writ is invariably to be issued.

(xvi.) † Those scheduled to be prohibited from taking any part in the subsequent election. Their active assistance to invalidate the election, making them also liable to be prosecuted for a corrupt practice. Subject to the same liabilities, the unseated member, if not scheduled, to be prohibited from taking any part in the subsequent election.

(xvii.) The instructions to the Royal Commissioners to be so altered that the outcome of their proceedings should be conviction, as well as exposure.

(xviii.) The Returning Officer's expenses to be borne by the rates or taxes.

(xix.) Systematic canvassing of every kind to be prohibited.

(xx.) Betting on the result of an election to be defined, and made a corrupt practice.

(xi.) The Returning Officer to send to each elector necessary information with regard to number on register, etc.

(xxii.) The date from whence "employment," etc., may begin to be defined.

POSTSCRIPT.—In connection with this subject the National Press Agency, Whitefriars Street, E.C., publish that which is somewhat in the nature of an Appendix to this paper, namely, the Draft Amendments which I propose should be incorporated in the Corrupt Practices Bill.

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OBJECTS.—To stimulate and promote Political education and Liberal organisation in the Metropolis and Home Counties, and to secure the adoption of Liberal principles in the Government of the country.

MEANS.—Public meetings, lectures, and the circulation of suitable publications ; strengthening and extending Liberal organisations ; and affording facilities, when necessary, for mutual consultation and joint action upon public questions.

MEMBERSHIP.—The Union consists of individual members who desire to co-operate in its work or sympathise with its objects, and who subscribe annually to its funds ; and of representatives of Liberal Associations, Clubs, and other organisations.

RELATIONSHIP TO LOCAL ASSOCIATIONS.—As it is the desire of the Union that every County and Borough shall have its own Representative Central Association (to which the various District Associations shall be affiliated), and shall thus manage its own affairs, the Union does not interfere with the work of such central associations, but co-operates with them in carrying out the objects above-named.

FUNDS.—The funds necessary to carry on the operations of the Union are raised by subscriptions and donations.

Copies of the Lecture List, and of the List of Publications supplied by the Union, may be had on application to the SECRETARY, at the Offices, 18, Walbrook, London, E.C.

THE LONDON AND COUNTIES LIBERAL UNION AND ITS WORK.

The Executive Committee commenced its work, in June last, by endeavouring to stimulate political organisation. Communications were opened with Liberal Associations and with active Liberals in the Home Counties, which have met with a very satisfactory response.

Considerable progress has been made in this important work ; where Associations already existed there has been increased activity, new Associations have been formed in many districts, and the work of organisation is now proceeding in every county constituency.

Believing that the best way of further stimulating organisation is to create an intelligent interest in politics, the Secretary is now arranging, in pursuance of a resolution of the Executive Committee, to visit places where there are no Associations, with a view of delivering Lectures and conferring with local Liberals.

The active educational work of the Union was necessarily deferred till after the long vacation ; since that period one hundred and six lectures have been either delivered or arranged for, and negotiations are in progress respecting others. Speakers have also been provided for a number of meetings.

The first publication issued by the Union was a cheap edition of Mr. Sydney Buxton's "Manual of Political Questions," a very useful work, which has had an extensive circulation. A considerable number of other pamphlets and publications has also been circulated, and a series of special pamphlets, leaflets, and hand-bills, suitable for wide distribution, is in course of preparation.

Assistance has been given to Central and Local Liberal Associations in the work of registration, by the publication and

free distribution of practical suggestions respecting that necessary and important duty of every Liberal Association.

Facilities were also afforded to the Metropolitan Liberal Associations for mutual consultation and joint action with reference to the important questions involved in the recent Registration Appeals. The advantage of mutual consultation is now further extended by the appointment of a Committee to consider the Corrupt Practices Bill, with the view of suggesting such amendments as the experience of those who have been actively engaged in the conduct of elections may show to be desirable with a view to its greater efficiency.

These are merely some of the principal methods adopted by the Executive Committee. There are many other directions in which it works in order to secure its two great objects, the promotion of Political Education and Liberal Organisation throughout the Metropolis and the Home Counties.

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